

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. Canceled
2. Canceled.
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  46. Canceled.
47. (Previously Presented) A multi-voice speech synthesis middleware layer of computer-readable instructions embedded on a computer-readable medium, the instructions being configured to, when executed, facilitate communication between one or more applications and a plurality of text-to-speech (TTS) engines, the multi-voice speech synthesis middleware layer comprising:
- at least a first voice object having an application interface configured to receive TTS engine attribute information from the application and to instantiate first and second TTS engines based on the TTS attribute information, to receive a speak request requesting at least one of the TTS engines to speak a message, and to receive priority information associated with each speak request indicative of a precedence each speak request is to take;
- wherein the first voice object has an engine interface configured to call a specified one of the first and

second TTS engines to synthesize input data; wherein the at least first voice object is configured to receive a normal priority associated with a message and to call the TTS engines so the message with normal priority is spoken in turn; and wherein the at least first voice object is configured to receive a speakover priority associated with a message and to call the TTS engines so the message with speakover priority is spoken at a same time as other currently speaking messages.

48. Canceled.

49. Canceled.

50. (Previously Presented) The multi-voice speech synthesis middleware layer of claim 47 wherein the at least first voice object is configured to receive an alert priority associated with a message and to call the TTS engines so the message with alert priority is spoken with precedence over messages with normal and speakover priority.

51. Canceled.

52. Canceled.

53. (Previously Amended) A method of formatting data for use by a speech engine and an audio device, comprising

obtaining, at a middleware layer which facilitates communication between the speech engine and an application, a data format for data used by the engine; obtaining, at the middleware layer, a data format of data used by the audio device;

determining, at the middleware layer, whether the engine data format and the audio data format are consistent; and

if not, utilizing the middleware layer to reconfigure the engine to change the data format of the data used by the engine.

54. Canceled.